**Let’s Go Dotty**

**I strongly support the Green Party recommendation that all packaged food have a clear and simple “traffic light” system of dots on packaging, green for go (healthy foods), orange for caution (eat in moderation), red for danger (eat a little). How would the use of coloured dots make a difference? Firstly, the current food labelling system often has ingredients listed in small print or in code so it is difficult to work out what is in the product. Secondly, there are now a wide range of foods to choose from and it is time consuming to select the healthy options. Finally, surveys show that many New Zealanders are becoming obese. The health of our nation is at risk!**

**With the current food labelling system, many products have labels that are difficult to read or understand. Have you read a list of ingredients and been faced with very small print or codes and scientific names that don’t mean anything to you? Apart from carrying a “decoder” there is no way a shopper can interpret this information correctly in order to make healthy food choices.**

**Furthermore, the range of products on the supermarket shelves are increasing all the time. Some appear to be healthy, for example crackers and noodles, but on closer inspection have high levels of saturated fats or salt. Unless shoppers have the time to read the labels and identify the ingredients, they may not be choosing healthy foods.**

**Most concerning of all, a recent year long study has shown that many New Zealanders are becoming dangerously obese and many are developing type 2 diabetes. Initiatives such as education and promoting exercise are not working fast enough. Health problems as a result of people eating the wrong foods are overloading the health system. Unless these people start eating healthier foods, the hospitals and medical staff will soon be overwhelmed.**

**I believe it is vital that the “traffic light” system of food labelling be introduced as soon as possible. Just think how quick and easy it would be to choose healthy food by using the dots. We could improve our health by making informed decisions when selecting food. Imagine what a positive and educational experience grocery shopping would become for the whole family. Let’s go dotty!**

**Alison Cook**